



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ARMY REFORMERS

BY MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM HARDING CARTER, U. S. A.

THE debt which the nation owes to the little and ever-changing group of far-seeing men who have struggled during the past half a century to keep alive a knowledge of progress in military matters will never be paid because most of them have passed from active participation in governmental affairs and many have crossed over the great divide.

To trace the careers and futile campaigns of education of even the most prominent of the reformers would require volumes, but there are some men and some measures that deserve more than passing mention. Without the dogged tenacity of a few who, refusing discouragement, kept alight the fires of reform and progress, the nation would have entered the present world war in far sadder plight than it actually did, even though we do not feel very proud of our initial efforts. To visualize conditions as they were when war was declared to exist with Germany we needs must go back half a century.

More than forty years before the enactment of the so-called National Defense Act of 1916, Congress investigated the subject of Army reform and had the benefit of advice from nearly all the prominent commanders in the Civil War. I studied these hearings at the time of their publication, and although holding the rank of second lieutenant, clear-cut convictions were formed and have remained to guide me in all my military career, involving an infinite variety of duties. It is quite impossible to obtain a copy of the valuable hearings now, and I may be pardoned for quoting briefly from the testimony of several generals, given without fear or favor and with no expectation of personal benefit. In reviewing such matters, the breakdown of 1898 should be remembered along with our recent troubles in War Department machinery.

After the war with Spain the solution of several impor-

tant problems affecting the army was committed to me. The most important result of my studies at that time was the firm opinion, based on evidence, that the War Department was hopelessly enmeshed, unless a corps of officers with duties corresponding to those of the General Staff of European armies could be provided for the American army. The idea was not new in my mind, but had been gradually formed as the result of a quarter of a century of comparison of views of well-informed officers. In his final report as Secretary of War, Honorable Elihu Root generously credited me with having devised, brought about and put into operation the law creating the American General Staff. It is, therefore, with much satisfaction that I pass on some of the credit to those who infected me with a desire to bring about the introduction of a General Staff Corps in our army.

Among those who testified before Congress after the close of the Civil War was General William B. Hazen, who said:

Except the officers of the supply department, who need no technical military education, all officers should have a well-grounded technical and military education, besides a good general education, but never should be entirely detached from troops, but have regular alternate periods of duty with them. . . . The organization of a general staff for an army I believe to be of very great importance. At present, while all other armies have such a body of men, which they are constantly improving and increasingly feel the need of, we have none, but in its place a number of special branches, all lacking the great essential to military efficiency—occasional tours of duty with troops. They are essentially office men, performing many of those clerical duties which ought to be done by officers detailed from regiments preparatory to regular staff duty. Their special character unfits them for the general purposes which become all important in war as aids of the highest grade of military experience to general commanders.

General Ranald S. Mackenzie, long reputed one of the most able and energetic of army commanders, among some very pointed remarks, said:

The routine life of an officer in one of our large cities may perhaps produce an officer of great method and care in the management of important records, but is little likely to form a kind and judicious adviser on great military questions, which the higher officers of the staff should be always. Probably no officer of the line of the army who has been brought into immediate contact with troops who has not thought very often, with perhaps some bitterness, how very much time and effort were expended over the little affairs by the staff, how mat-

ters were carefully considered that should be disposed by subordinates, and how on questions of quite serious public business it was sometimes impossible to obtain even an answer.

At this early date Emory Upton, who later became an advocate of a general staff, confined his recommendations to the introduction of a detail or interchangeable system of staff bureau organization so that, with the exception of the Engineer, Ordnance and Medical Corps, line officers would be detailed to fill the Staff Corps and would return at stated periods to duty with troops.

General Samuel W. Crawford, who commanded a division at the battle of Antietam and again at Gettysburg, expressed very tritely an opinion, concurred in by all our reformers:

Whatever system is adopted, it should be one capable of great expansion in case of emergency or in time of war. The most serious obstacle to the efficiency of the army in the beginning of the war was the lack of trained or experienced staff officers. Had the government been able to have furnished such officers to the general officers, as they were appointed, or to corps, division and brigade headquarters, the difference both in economy and efficiency would have been very great. I see every reason why, in any peace establishment, the freest opportunity should be given to the officers of the line of the army to learn these important duties.

General Abner Doubleday, a veteran of the Mexican War, who commanded the First Corps at Gettysburg, tersely remarked:

In my opinion, everything in the army should be subordinate to the fighting element. To transfer from the line to the staff and from the staff to the line has a tendency to bind all parts together and to excite the young officers to study and to emulate each other.

Twenty years before these hearings were concluded these identical opinions existed in the army and were given expression by the Secretary of War in his annual report for 1857:

Attention has been repeatedly called to defects in the organization of the army, and to various details in reference to several of its parts. As these evils increase with time and practice under them, I must again bring them before you. To place the staff in proper relation to the rest of the army, the law should collect all the officers doing that branch of duty into one corps, to be assigned by authority of the President to such duties as each may seem to be best fitted for, securing to each the rank and relative position he now holds. But as some staff corps are confined to duties requiring special instruction and long experience,

their separate organization might be retained. A general provision dispensing with the staff bureaus and giving the President authority to regulate the duties on the principles above stated, and to transfer, when necessary, officers to and from the line and staff, would restore the institution to its proper effectiveness.

With all the evidence laid before the committee of Congress a conclusion was reached and announced, which, in the light of subsequent neglect to provide the instrumentalities and detailed laws to govern our preparedness, reads like a practical joke:

Our army is viewed as a nucleus wherein is to be acquired and preserved military knowledge and from which should radiate the elements of instruction and discipline, thus to form in time of war a competent force endowed with talent to direct it as a whole, and provided with agencies capable of grasping the responsibility, organization and distribution of numerous supplies necessary to the conduct of successful military operations.

From a period long antedating the Civil War there had been a growing tendency on the part of chiefs of staff bureaus to withdraw from all control by the Commanding General of the Army and to recognize no authority except that of the Secretary of War. Several years after the close of the hearings, from which excerpts have been given, and four days after he assumed the office of President, General Grant undertook to settle the long-debated question of authority by directing the chiefs of bureaus to report to and act under the immediate orders of the general commanding the army, who at that time was General Sherman. Instead of a loyal acceptance of the order, its revocation was accomplished in a few days and the bureau chiefs secured an order from the new Secretary of War, John A. Rawlins, that all official business requiring his action should be submitted by the bureau chiefs to the Secretary of War. Under this system the Commanding General of the Army became a figurehead and did not even have control of orders issued daily in his name to the army. The desire of bureau chiefs to be independent of control of the Commanding General led them to cause to be inserted in nearly all legislation imposing duties upon their bureaus provisions that the business should be executed under the Secretary of War. The result was to overburden the Secretary of War to such an extent that he was unable to give proper attention to the manifold duties thrust upon him. Those responsible for the efficiency and

discipline of the army had now lost control of its equipment and supply. The absorption by the bureau chiefs of all power carried with it responsibility, as they were to learn in the next crisis of war, when the breakdown of their carefully hedged system gave the reformers the opportunity they had striven for since the war with Mexico half a century before.

In my studies of our military history I have often been impressed with the number of proposed reforms that took fifty years to bring about. Among the notable things may be mentioned smokeless powder, the formula for which was purchased by our Government from the inventor in Germany in 1846. After being tested by the Ordnance Department and its efficiency established, it was recommended by that department that the new powder be not adopted, for reasons which now would seem uncanny.

It is remarkable that any of the serious-minded reformers should have maintained enthusiasm and hopefulness under the discouragements of our antiquated system. The remark was often heard that nothing but a sound whipping and serious disaster could possibly arouse public opinion sufficiently to make itself felt in the creation of a correct military policy.

The condition of affairs in Cuba had attracted our serious concern for fifty years and we had endeavored to buy the island and evade difficulty. No one dreamed that a war with Spain would sever the last of her overseas possessions and reopen the whole subject of army reform at the same time, but such was the result, for public opinion was aroused over our shortcomings to a degree that victory could not assuage and still.

As a result of the general dissatisfaction concerning the conduct of the war a new Secretary of War was installed, and it soon became evident that he had reached a determination to analyze the military system and reconstruct and reform it where necessary. It was a great privilege to be associated in the work, and I have much satisfaction in having participated in many reforms which are now repaying a thousand-fold for all the strain incident to their accomplishment.

It had been my good fortune to have served under Emory Upton, a rare and far-seeing student. Selected by General Sherman to make a tour of the world to study the military

systems with a view to improving our own, he visited many countries, and upon his return made a comprehensive report, which was promptly filed in the pigeonholes of the War Department. General Upton then embraced his conclusions and recommendations in a volume, *The Armies of Europe and Asia*, and found a publisher with sufficient patriotism to print the book. Among the first magazine articles written by me nearly thirty years ago was one in which I urged that Upton's work be not allowed to die without action. I was a lieutenant then and little dreamed that within ten or twelve years I should be in a position to present briefs to a lawyer Secretary, backed by the studies of Upton concerning several important reforms.

It has been a matter of serious regret to me that some of those who had long ago so clearly comprehended the defects of our military system were not among the living to witness the final accomplishment of many of the reforms they had urged in vain. Few, if any, of their plans have been adopted as a whole, but the seed they had sown bore fruit in the establishment of the detail system, post-graduate schools and finally a General Staff Corps. All this was brought about in the face of much inertia and sometimes serious opposition. When I had submitted for approval a general order prepared by me after long study of all the points involved, and which established the Army War College, the General Service and Staff School, and Garrison schools, as part of a system intended to coördinate military education, I was astounded to learn that the Commanding General of the Army had filed objections to the abolition of the garrison lyceum, an institution established a few years before without standards of any kind and with no provisions for graduation from the never-ending round of service manuals and essays. The record was all against their continuance and the lyceums were abolished. With these important matters adjusted, the newly-reorganized army of 1901 was prepared for its forward movement of preparation. There still remained the greater accomplishment—the creation of a General Staff.

When the preparation of this great and important reform was entrusted to me I really believed it possible to create a General Staff Corps and inject it into the then existing system, but eventually it became certain that the best results could be obtained only by eliminating the office of Commanding General of the Army, which had long been merely an

empty title, luring prominent generals to sure disappointment and lifelong grievances. I then submitted the bill which created a Chief of Staff with power of supervision and coördination of bureaus, as well as of the other parts of the military establishment. After many buffetings and storms, it was finally enacted into law, but as a salve to the opposition it was made operative at a date subsequent to the retirement of the incumbent of the office of Commanding General of the Army.

Now that the necessity for a general staff for the army has become generally recognized throughout the nation and we are proceeding to make war along carefully-planned lines, it does not make palatable reading to go over the hearing of a chief of bureau who asked to be heard in opposition to the bill recommended by the Secretary of War and the President. He was a typical bureaucrat, with much political influence, and secured the defeat of the measure in the features relating to the absorption by the General Staff, of the corps of which he was the chief. As he held a permanent position, and had many years to serve before reaching the age of retirement, an arrangement was entered into whereby he could be promoted if he applied for immediate retirement.

Generally speaking, the chiefs of bureaus were not enthusiastic about outside reformers, but the majority of them appeared to rise to the occasion and the revised General Staff Bill became a law at the next session. The animus of some of the permanent officials, who remained in office while Secretaries came and passed on without leaving serious scars on bureaucratic privilege, was never deeply concealed, and in later years the bureau chiefs were always assured of the sympathy of friends on the committees of Congress, as evidenced by the restrictive clauses appearing at intervals in acts intended to limit and hedge in the operations of the General Staff. Many of the vindictive opponents of the great reform brought about by the introduction of the General Staff seem in recent years to have met their Waterloo, and the Army moves forward.

When an old officer of the regular army harks back to the period of the Indian Wars, following close upon the cessation of hostilities incident to the Civil War, he has no difficulty in reaching definite conclusions as to the causes of dissatisfaction and desertions. There was no vegetable component of the ration in those days and part of the soldiers'

flour was taken to support the regimental band, though only the organizations at headquarters ever were privileged to hear any music. Officers were called upon to contribute for the purchase of instruments and music. The men for the bands were taken from the strength of small companies.

My personal experience had been unique, for my urgent recommendations as the regimental supply officer that potatoes be added to the ration brought forth a request from the Commissary General that my letters on that subject should be stopped by order. I survived to see the vegetable ration given to our troops, and when I was directed to prepare the act reorganizing the army after the war with Spain, I took particular pains to procure the legal establishment of bands and provision to support them without reduction of the soldier's flour ration. With the passing of the years and the coming of wars the food and pay have both been bettered, until all cause for just complaint has been removed.

During a long course of years many notes had accumulated and I prepared a book on the American Army. Following its publication and my retirement for age soon after, I was invited to assist the Military Committee of the Senate in preparing the National Defense Act of 1916. I have never witnessed an exhibition of patience and patriotism exceeding that shown by a small number of the committee in listening to advice, and in an earnest endeavor to arrive at compromises of the widely divergent interests demanding recognition in the new laws. It was shocking to see so many evidences of unseemly selfishness, parading under the banners of preparedness. The National Guard Association, the Dental Association, the Medical Association, the Veterinary Association, the Chaplains' Association and other interests, all demanding rank and other considerations, with little or no regard to the real object of the legislation, the creation of a fighting machine. It soon became apparent that with general elections approaching no legislation for the reorganization of the fighting forces could be obtained without giving way to the demands of the many associations.

For many years I had been trying to obtain legislation authorizing the appointment of young soldiers in the ranks as cadets at West Point. With so much wrangling, it seemed that the general bill would be delayed, and I requested the committee to act on the provision for these cadet appointments as a separate bill. This was immediately assented to,

and when the bill prepared by me was laid before the Senate the member of that body through whom the National Guard committee on legislation was operating expressed the opinion that no one but an army officer would object to such a measure, and it would meet his approval if half the vacancies were given to the National Guard. His amendment was accepted, and as the bill became a law a young man in civil life may enlist in the National Guard and after one year, without any requirement of training of any kind, he enjoys the same privilege as his brother in the regulars, who is required to render a year's service in actual training and performance of duty. I then realized that with its threatening influence at the polls, the National Guard could defeat the reorganization of the Army, unless their demands, in the main, were acceded to in the final shaping of the bill. They believed in the policy which had shaped their course for some years, but I did not because I knew that they could never meet the requirements of modern war unless other machinery was provided to fill their ranks. My professional objections arose from their antagonism to every proposition for a National or Federal force, the only character of army reliable for all purposes, in the contests between modern nations-in-arms. It is within fair limits to say that had the personal and selfish interests, backed up by particular members of Congress, abstained from interference in the legislation, a law could have been developed under which the nation would have prepared for war at a cost of several billions of dollars less than has been the case. Nothing could save the country but general authority for the President to set aside restrictive machinery and broaden the powers of those who best comprehended the war problems confronting the nation.

General Grant frequently expressed the opinion that the nation would have fared better if the regular army had been dispersed to train and fight the volunteers of 1861. All training of the regular army, under the schemes of the reformers had that in view when garrison schools, post-graduate schools, and the staff and war colleges were created so that every officer should have the opportunity to qualify for the examinations required before promotions. Through a system of personal records a fair estimate of each officer's ability could always be made. The results are now making themselves known under the excellent system of appointing experienced regular officers, with due regard to previous

rank as far as possible, to train and command the divisions, brigades, regiments and other organizations of the new and greater army of the United States.

I endeavored to set forth the difficulties with which we had permitted the nation to be embarrassed in an article published in *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* for March, 1917, entitled "Our Defective Military System." Those difficulties have not all been eliminated, but the nation may take encouragement that all that is possible has been done to minimize them.

The cause for which the nation fights is everything. The interests of individuals count for nothing except as they merge in the common purpose to win victory. Those in control of our military problems are equal to the great responsibility and may be counted upon to secure a correct verdict on the fields of battle. When victory has come to our arms in decisive and unquestionable terms, necessity will again arise for reorganizing the military establishment. The nation's interests will then be best subserved if we can break away from all pre-conceived ideas of hearings and compromises before the military committees of the Senate and House and have a joint committee to hear the representatives of the General Staff expound plans prepared under instructions from the President. The policy under which any reorganization is to be made having been adopted, all hearings as to details should be in writing for consideration by a committee of the General Staff. When their recommendations have been examined and approved by the President, it should be made impossible for anyone in the military service to be heard in person before the committees of Congress. Public opinion should support members of Congress threatened by associations of any kind, for the latter represent only human selfishness. By this course the nation may come to have a military policy which will enable it to maintain a minimum establishment in peace, a maximum of efficiency in war, and the need for reformers will have passed.

WILLIAM HARDING CARTER.